

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8654

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 6602

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: PFOR, PO

SUBJECT: SOARES AIDE ON SOCIALIST PROSPECTS AND
COMMUNIST STRATEGY

REFS: (A) LISBON 6464 (DTG 211611Z SEP 76)

(B) LISBON 6590 (DTG 270916Z SEP 76)

(C) LISBON 6589 (DTG 250950Z SEP 76)

1. CABINET UNDERSECRETARY AND CLOSE SOARES ASSOCIATE
CUNHA REGO, TOLD ME OVER WEEKEND (SEPTEMBER 25) THAT HE
WAS NOW OPTIMISTIC ABOUT SOARES'S PROSPECTS. HE THOUGHT
SOARES HAD A GOOD CHANCE TO GET PORTUGAL THROUGH
ITS IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS. TO DO SO, HOWEVER, HE
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THOUGHT SOARES WOULD HAVE TO MAKE SOME CABINET

CHANGES, BRINGING IN MORE CAPABLE ADMINISTRATORS TO HELP GET THE GOVERNMENT MACHINERY GOING. HE WAS ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT SOARES'S PREOCCUPATION WITH THE FORTHCOMING PS NATIONAL CONGRESS (OCT 30-NOV 1) AND HIS TENDENCY TO TRY TO REACH AN ACCOMMODATION WITH THE PS LEFT WING. CUNHA REGO THOUGHT SOARES WOULD EVENTUALLY HAVE TO TAKE A VERY TOUGH LINE WITHIN THE PARTY AND STICK TO IT.

2. CUNHA REGO WAS NOT PARTICULARLY WORRIED ABOUT RUMBLINGS WITHIN THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT, UNUSUAL FOR HIM. CUNHA REGO'S PROBLEM, HE SAID, WAS TO DEAL WITH WHAT APPEARED TO BE A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN COMMUNIST STRATEGY. THE COMMUNISTS WERE GIVING LESS EMPHASIS TO THE SOCIAL AREAS LIKE EDUCATION, WHERE THEY ARE NOW ON THE DEFENSIVE (REFTEL A) AND CONCENTRATING ON INFILTRATING THEIR PEOPLE INTO THE PUBLIC WORKS AREA, PARTICULARLY PROJECTS INVOLVING BASIC SANITATION. CUNHA REGO UNDERScoreD THE POLITICAL IMPORTANCE OF WATER SUPPLY IN RURAL AREAS. HE SAID THE PRESENT PUBLIC WORKS MINISTER WAS A GOOD MAN TECHNICALLY, BUT DID NOT HAVE THE POLITICAL SOPHISTICATION NEEDED TO DEAL WITH THE COMMUNISTS. HE URGED THAT WE KEEP IN DIRECT TOUCH WITH EANES' STAFF ON OUR BASIC SANITATION PROJECTS. I ASSURED HIM WE WOULD.

3. COMMENT: AFTER LISTENING TO SA CARNEIRO AND FREITAS DO AMARAL (REFTELS B AND C) I HAD EXPECTED CUNHA REGO, A NOTORIOUS PESSIMIST, TO BE IN THE DEPTHS OF DESPAIR. HIS QUALIFIED OPTIMISM MAY REFLECT THE CHANGING ATMOSPHERE CREATED BY THE GOVERNMENT'S INCREASED DETERMINATION TO DEAL WITH THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. HIS OBSERVATION THAT CHANGES ARE UNDERWAY IN PCP STRATEGY IS A VIEW THAT IS GAINING CURRENCY AMONG LOCAL COMMUNIST WATCHERS, BUT MOST OF THEIR JUDGMENTS ARE STILL BASED ON SPECULATION AND SUPPOSITION RATHER THAN HARD EVIDENCE.
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